

AGARA LAKE: STRUGGLE OF REVIVAL



-Kavitha Reddy,
Lake Activist

Even as Lake Development Authority (LDA) drags on the Detailed Project Report (DPR) process without paying any attention to the basic maintenance of Agara Lake, the October rains have ensured the lake is back to life with water to the brim. The birds, fishes and the flora & fauna are back in the lake, the lush green trees feels more relaxing than ever, a lap around the lake gives the much needed fresh air this is missing in the concrete jungles of Bengaluru.

LDA has been neglecting the lake without de-weeding or removal of hyacinth which has been rapidly growing in the lake, nothing much to speak about on the cleaning of the lake surrounding, all in the excuse of DPR. There is an urgency and a need to complete the DPR in a stipulated time and to take it to the implementation level and revive the lake to the fullest. The reasons known only to LDA, there is no sign of a timeline nor a sense of urgency even after 18 months since the citizens first started the Save Agara Lake drive.

Added to the apathy of LDA are BWSSB's inability to ensure that the sewage water is not let into the SWD and most importantly BBMP unwillingness to keep the SWD garbage and silt free. Even an average rain floods the city of Bengaluru and it will not be an exaggeration to say that if BBMP keeps all the 800+kms of SWD clean the rain water will fill the lakes in Bengaluru and the case of Agara Lake is no different.



Even after repeated follow-up LDA has not shown any interest in getting a check-dam build in the main SWD to feed the lake nor has it asked the BBMP to clear the blockages in the smaller SWD that are in the Agara Lake catchment area. With lake activists form the Save Agara Lake Forum running from pillar to post; it was indeed the support and guidance from Ugrappa, MLC that lead to some drastic action to finally get water into Agara Lake.

Agara Lake has a very good catchment area and is also part of the lake cluster that is interlinked, Bengaluru received good amount of rains between June-October, and this year also it was no different. Last year Agara Lake was full much earlier and the difference being this year there seem to be a consolidated effort from LDA, BBMP and BWSSB not to utilize the good rains to fill the lake. If not for the lake activist who got the active support and participation from Ugrappa,

MLC the lake would have stayed dry.

The change in the attitude of these authorities only suggests that there is an aggressive push to waste Rs 35 crore of public money on an STP with would also have a yearly expenditure of Rs 1 crore, which actually may not be required if LDA, BBMP, BWSSB do the work they are suppose to be doing.

The nexus seems to be getting clear day by day, the intent is to ensure that the lake dries-up, and the agenda of STP is pushed. People who have been in the lake vicinity and the residents of Agara village know very well that the lake is a rain water harvesting zone and the lake has always received good inflow of water even when the lake was under litigation and was completely abandoned for few years.

The fact of the matter is that the greed of money and builder nexus seem to be delaying the lake revival process, and it is the time LDA is held accountable and asked to be transparent about the DPR and the timelines for revival works to start.

It is the time the elected representatives take a good long walk around the lake and see the number of missed opportunities, the chocked water inlets point at the story of how the authorities has systematically trying to cut the rain water inflow to the lake.

City of Bengaluru which was once known as a city of 1,000 lakes now has about 150+ identified lakes and lake activists from every corner of the city are putting a brave fight to retain, revive and rejuvenate the lakes. Agara Lake has a history of more than 100 years, the hallmark of the lake is its wetland design which serves as an excellent bio-filter and is also a rainwater harvesting zone, most importantly it's the pride of HSR Layout; it must be restored to its past glory in the right way and should not end up as one more scam in the making.



CAMPAIGN

Swachh HSR Layout Sector - 2 is organizing an awareness campaign from 10 am-12pm on 8th November on 24th Main Road near Puravankara Apartments main entrance gate. Residents from HSR Layout and shopkeepers along with students and staff members of NIFT and Cambridge Public School will participate in the programme. Corporator Latha Narasimhamurthy, BBMP Joint Commissioner Muni Raju, Bommanhalli Zone and his team will support the campaign.

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